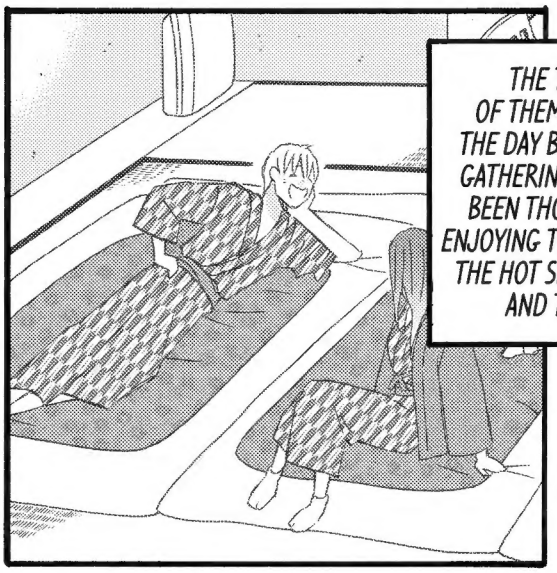
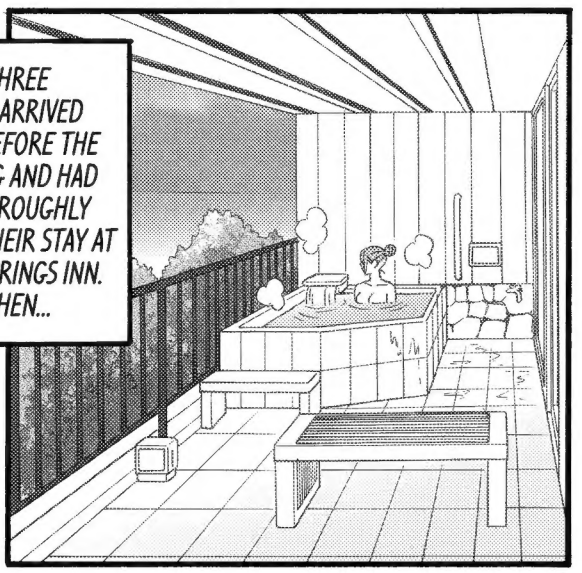
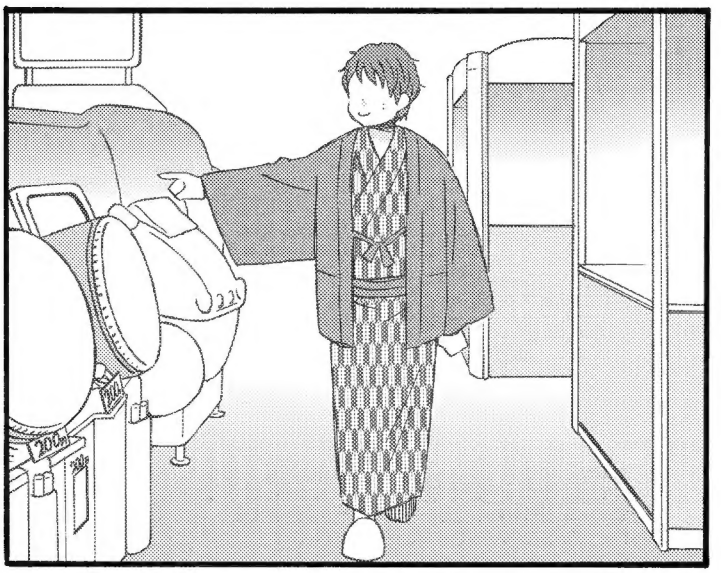
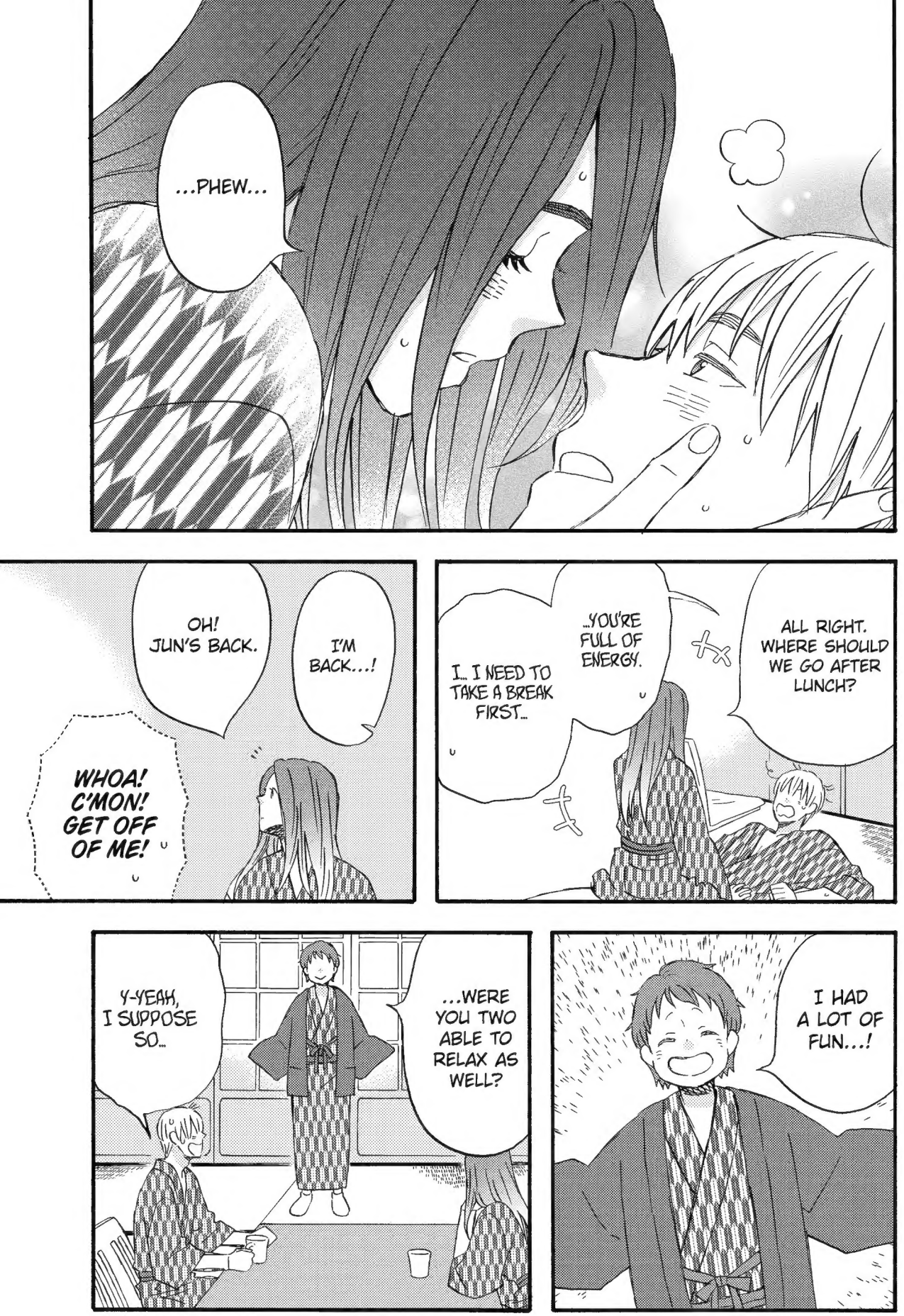
PREVIOUSLY ON LA LA LA... SHIROU-KUN, AI-SAN, AND THEIR SON JUN-KUN ARE STAYING AT A HOT SPRING INN IN ORDER TO ATTEND THE KIRISHIMA FAMILY'S NEW YEAR'S GATHERING.
CYPRESS INN


THE THREE OF THEM ARRIVED THE DAY BEFORE THE GATHERING AND HAD BEEN THOROUGHLY ENJOYING THEIR STAY AT THE HOT SPRINGS INN. AND THEN...

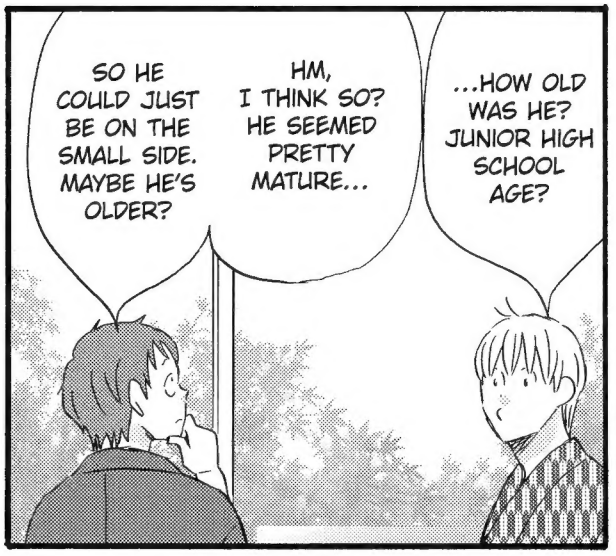


HAA...

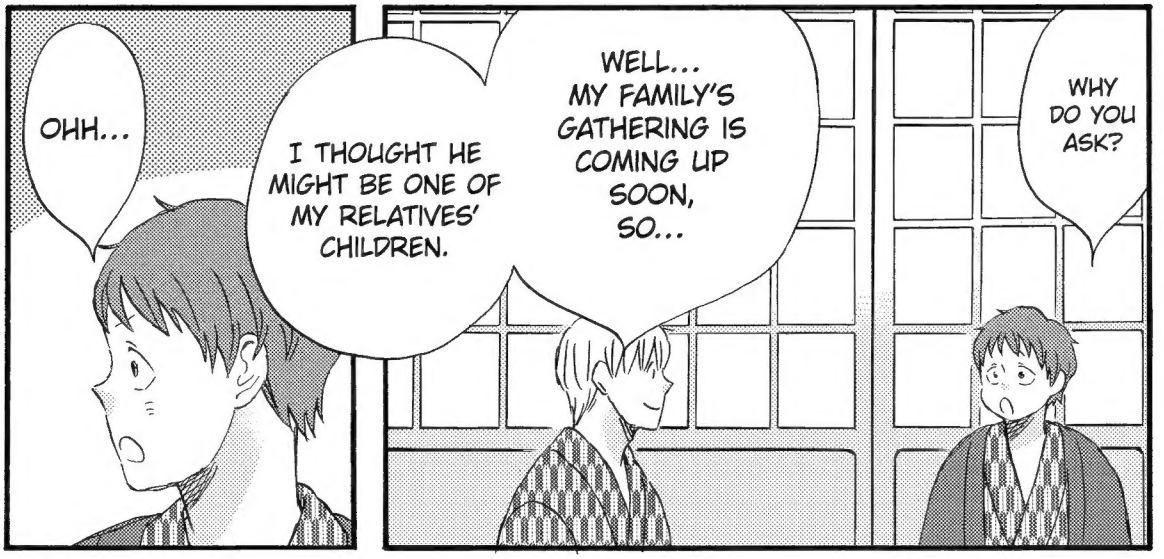


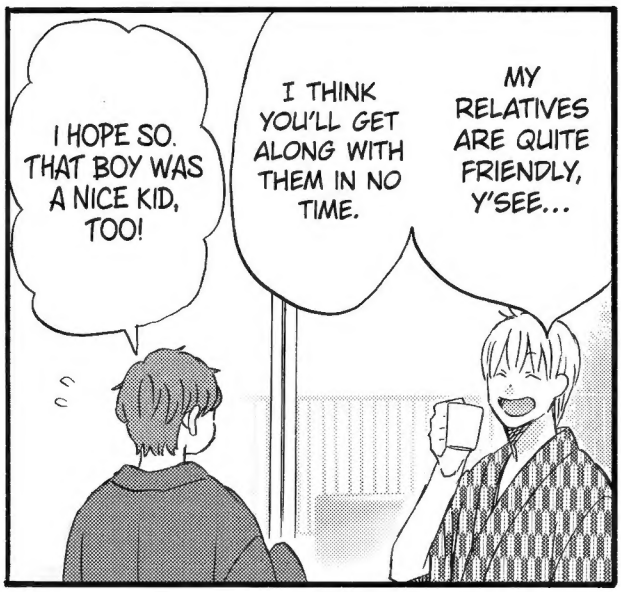

...PHEW...
OH! JUN'S BACK.
I'M BACK...!
WHOA! C'MON! GET OFF OF ME!
I... I NEED TO TAKE A BREAK FIRST...
...YOU'RE FULL OF ENERGY.
ALL RIGHT. WHERE SHOULD WE GO AFTER LUNCH?
Y-YEAH, I SUPPOSE SO...
...WERE YOU TWO ABLE TO RELAX AS WELL?
I HAD A LOT OF FUN...!

OHH... THAT'S NICE!
HEH HEH! I WAS AT THE ARCADE, PLAYING WITH A BOY ABOUT MY AGE THAT I MET.
YOU TOOK LONGER THAN I THOUGHT.
HOW DID YOUR EXPLORATION GO? DID YOU CHECK OUT ALL THE PLACES IN THIS INN?

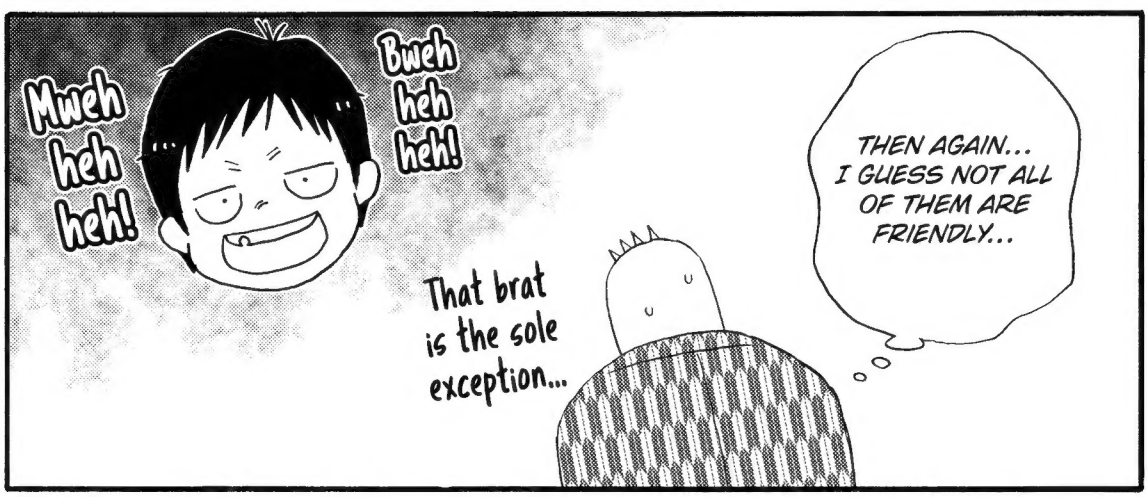

SO HE COULD JUST BE ON THE SMALL SIDE. MAYBE HE'S OLDER?
HM, I THINK SO? HE SEEMED PRETTY MATURE...
...HOW OLD WAS HE? JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL AGE?

I SHOULD'VE DONE THAT!
AHH... I FORGOT TO ASK HIS NAME.
DID YOU MAKE A FRIEND?
What was he like?

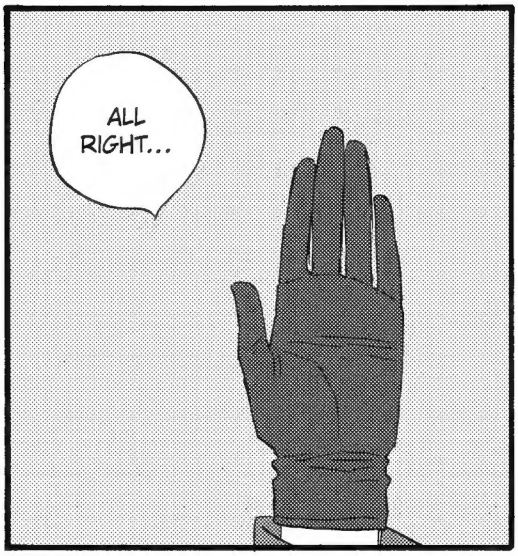

OHH...
I THOUGHT HE MIGHT BE ONE OF MY RELATIVES' CHILDREN.
WELL... MY FAMILY'S GATHERING IS COMING UP SOON, SO...
WHY DO YOU ASK?

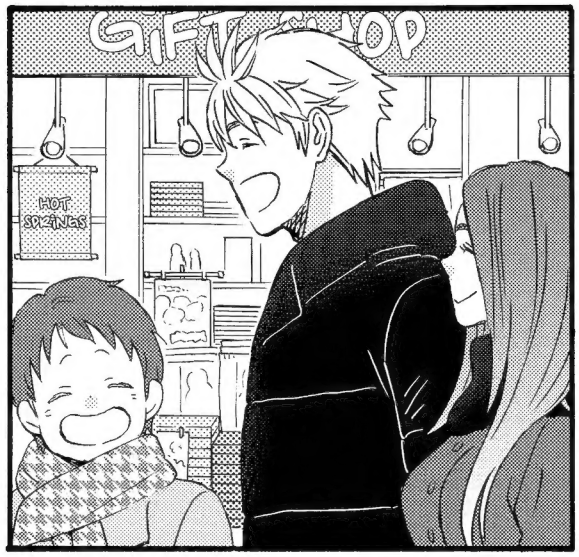

I HOPE SO. THAT BOY WAS A NICE KID, TOO!
I THINK YOU'LL GET ALONG WITH THEM IN NO TIME.
MY RELATIVES ARE QUITE FRIENDLY, Y'SEE...

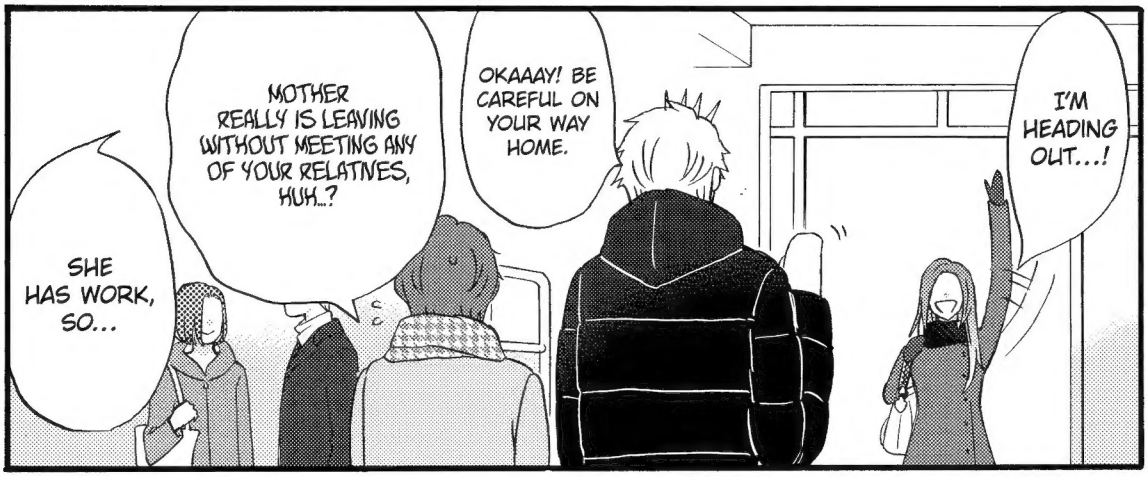
Oh, man...
I HOPE THAT'S REALLY THE CASE...
THAT'S POSSIBLE ...
THEN, MAYBE WE'LL MEET UP AGAIN TONIGHT!

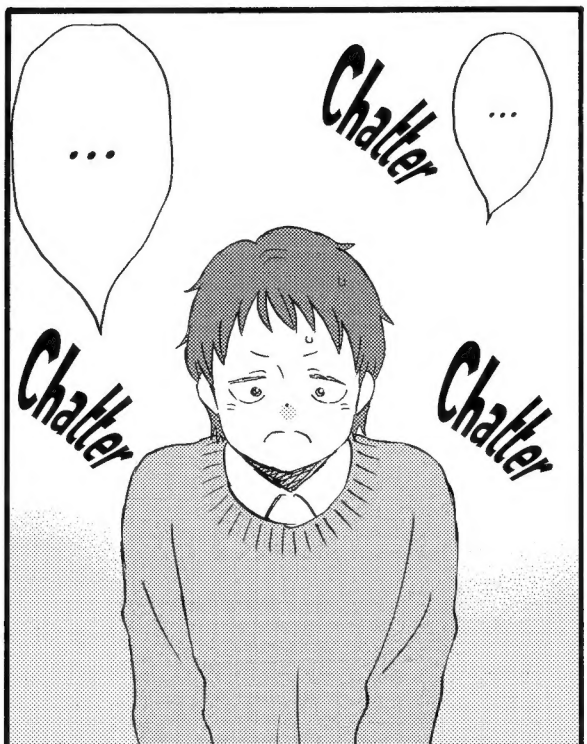

Mweh heh heh!
Bweh heh heh!
That brat is the sole exception...
THEN AGAIN... I GUESS NOT ALL OF THEM ARE FRIENDLY...

ALL RIIIGHT! LET'S DO SOME SIGHTSEEING UNTIL EVENING...!
YEAH!

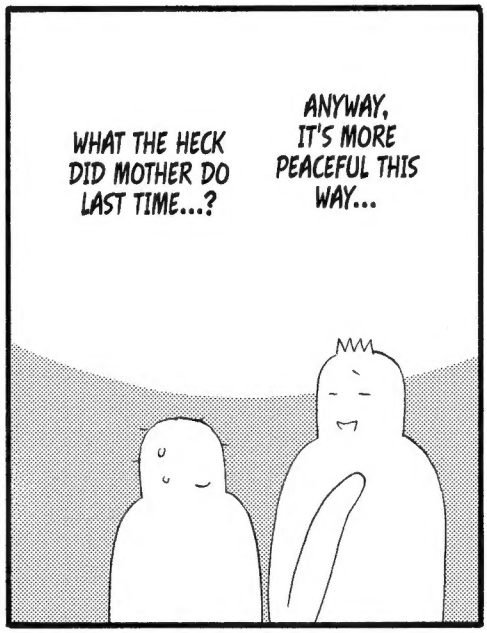

ALL RIGHT...


HOT SPRINGS


SHE HAS WORK, SO...
MOTHER REALLY IS LEAVING WITHOUT MEETING ANY OF YOUR RELATIVES, HUH...?
OKAAAY! BE CAREFUL ON YOUR WAY HOME.
I'M HEADING OUT...!

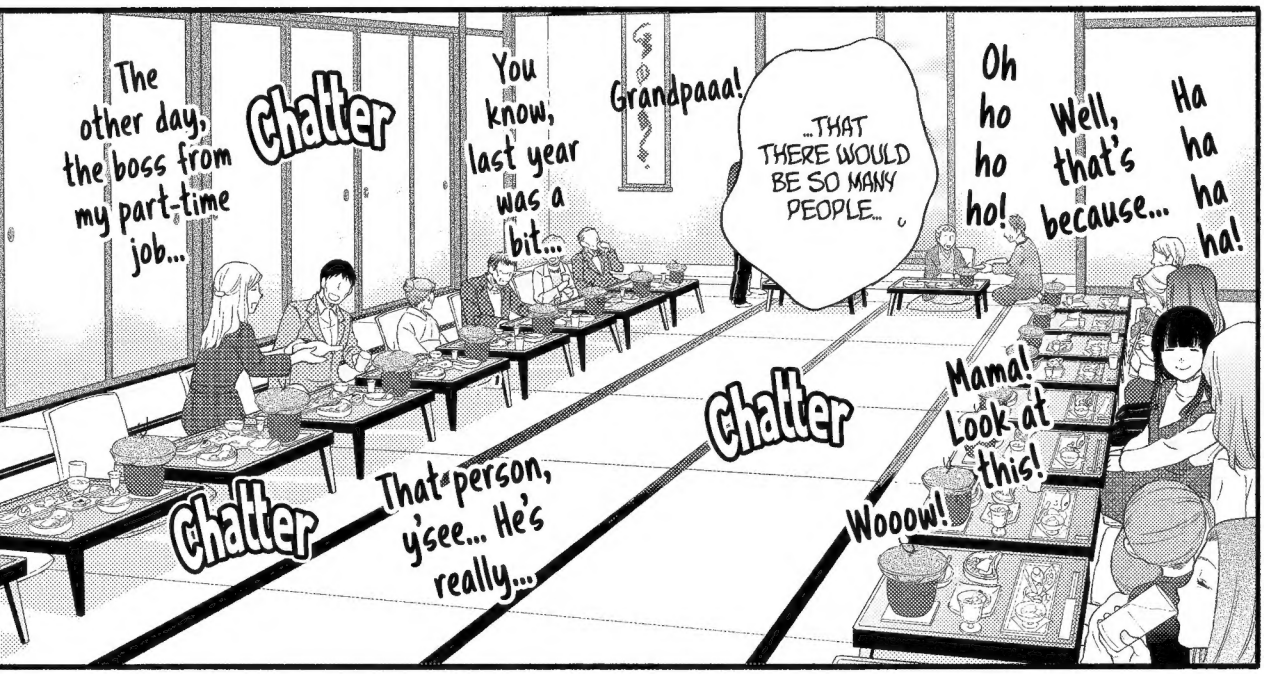

...
Chatter
...
Chatter
Chatter

AND SO...

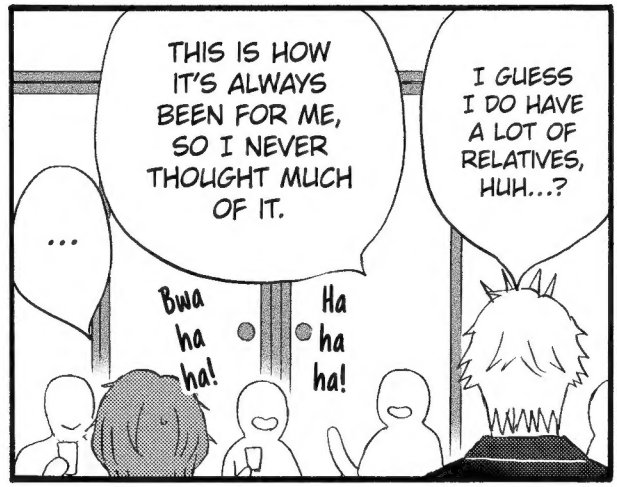

WHAT THE HECK DID MOTHER DO LAST TIME...?
ANYWAY, IT'S MORE PEACEFUL THIS WAY...

By the way, do you remember...
GLANCE

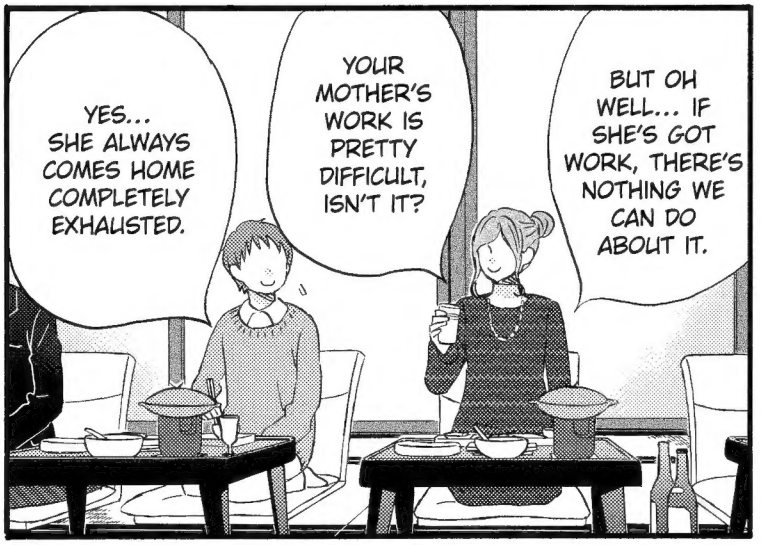
It really has been a while!
Chatter
Ha ha ha!
Y-YEAH.
JUN-KUN, ARE YOU OKAY?
IT'S JUST... I DIDN'T EXPECT...
Chatter


The other day, the boss from my part-time job...
Chatter
You know, last year was a bit...
Grandpaaa!
...THAT THERE WOULD BE SO MANY PEOPLE...
Oh ho ho ho!
Well, that's because...
Ha ha ha ha!
Chatter
Mama! Look at this!
Chatter
That person, y'see... He's really...
Wooow!

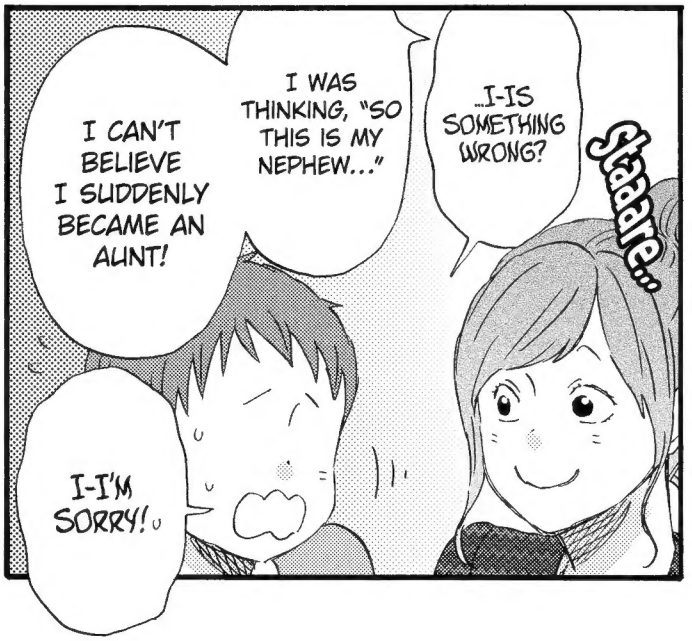
HA HA HA! INDEED I DID! I REMEMBER MY FRIENDS BEING JEALOUS OF ME...
YOU MUST'VE GOTTEN PLENTY OF NEW YEAR'S MONEY, HUH?

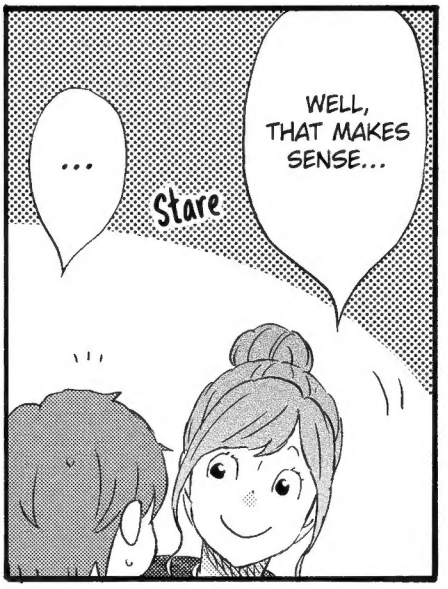

THIS IS HOW IT'S ALWAYS BEEN FOR ME, SO I NEVER THOUGHT MUCH OF IT.
I GUESS I DO HAVE A LOT OF RELATIVES, HUH...?
...
Bwa ha ha!
Ha ha ha!

REALLY... I WISH I COULD HAVE A WORD WITH WHOEVER CREATED THIS CURSED NEW YEAR'S MONEY TRADITION...
10000
A RELENTLESS AVALANCHE OF EXPENSES, SO EARLY IN THE NEW YEAR...
10000
10000
BUT NOW THAT I'M AN ADULT, IT'S MY TURN TO GIVE BACK INSTEAD OF RECEIVING...

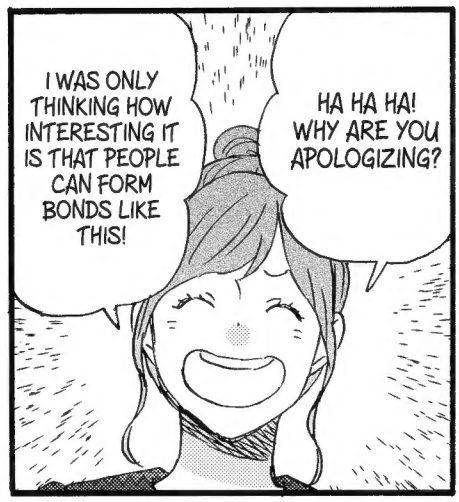

YES... SHE ALWAYS COMES HOME COMPLETELY EXHAUSTED.
YOUR MOTHER'S WORK IS PRETTY DIFFICULT, ISN'T IT?
BUT OH WELL... IF SHE'S GOT WORK, THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO ABOUT IT.

MAN... IT'S A PITY THAT AI-SAN HAS GONE HOME ALREADY...


I CAN'T BELIEVE I SUDDENLY BECAME AN AUNT!
I WAS THINKING, "SO THIS IS MY NEPHEW..."
...I-IS SOMETHING WRONG?
Staaare...
I-I'M SORRY!


...
Stare
WELL, THAT MAKES SENSE...

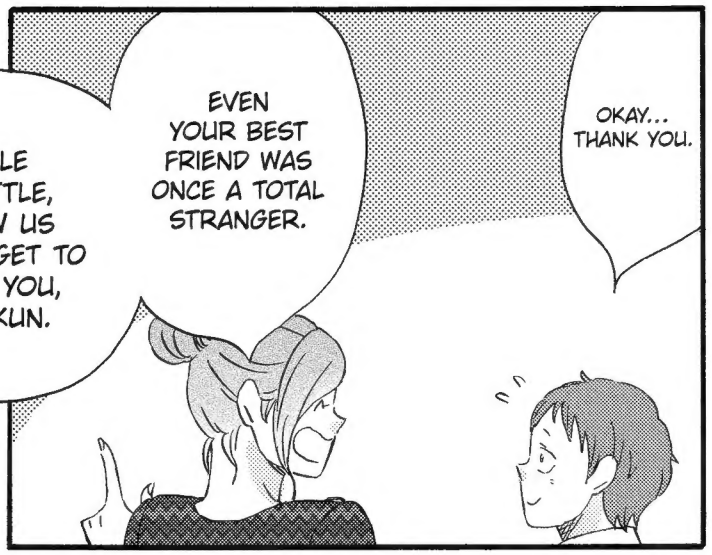
I'M NOT BOTHERING HIM! HE LOOKED NERVOUS, SO I WAS JUST HELPING HIM BREAK THE ICE...
MAYU... DON'T BOTHER JUN-KUN...

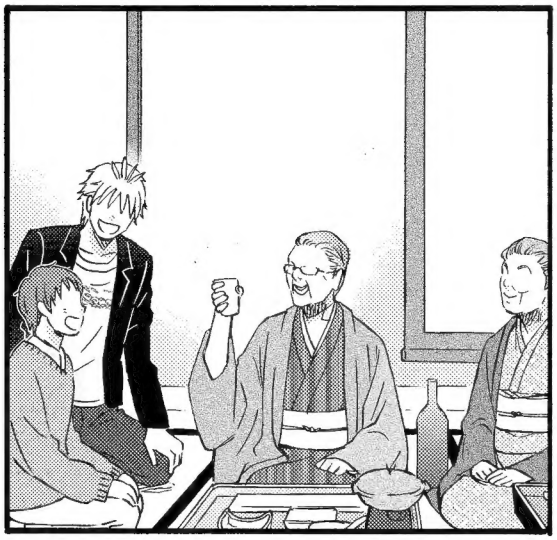

I WAS ONLY THINKING HOW INTERESTING IT IS THAT PEOPLE CAN FORM BONDS LIKE THIS!
HA HA HA! WHY ARE YOU APOLOGIZING?

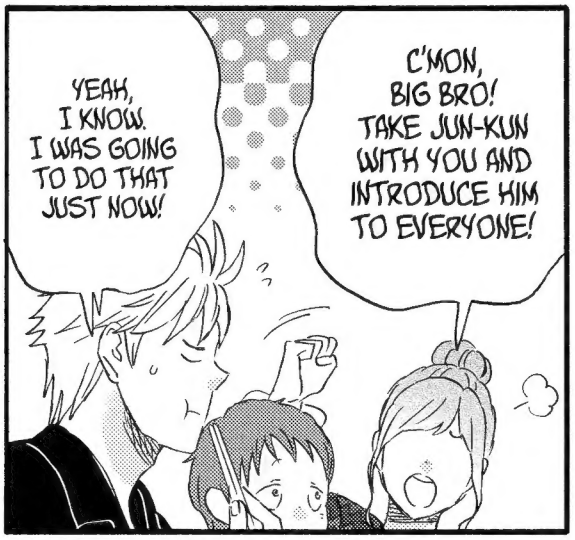
WELL, ANYWAY... JUN-KUN, YOU WERE SUDDENLY BROUGHT TO OUR FAMILY GATHERING.
SO YOU PROBABLY FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE SINCE YOU'RE SURROUNDED BY PEOPLE YOU DON'T KNOW. BUT...

REMEMBER, YOU'RE ALREADY A MEMBER OF OUR FAMILY.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO FEEL LIKE YOU DON'T BELONG HERE!

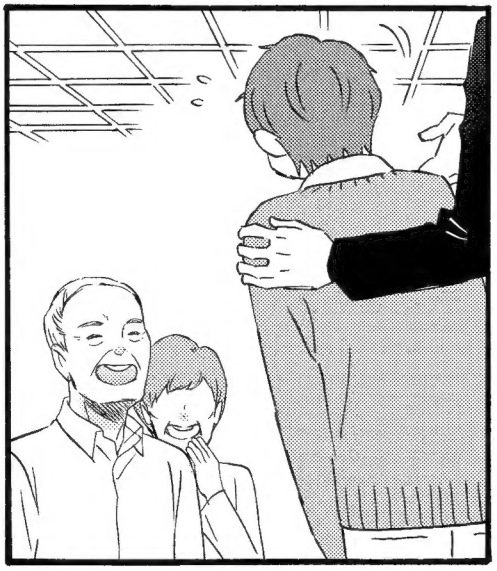
LITTLE BY LITTLE, ALLOW US ALL TO GET TO KNOW YOU, JUN-KUN.

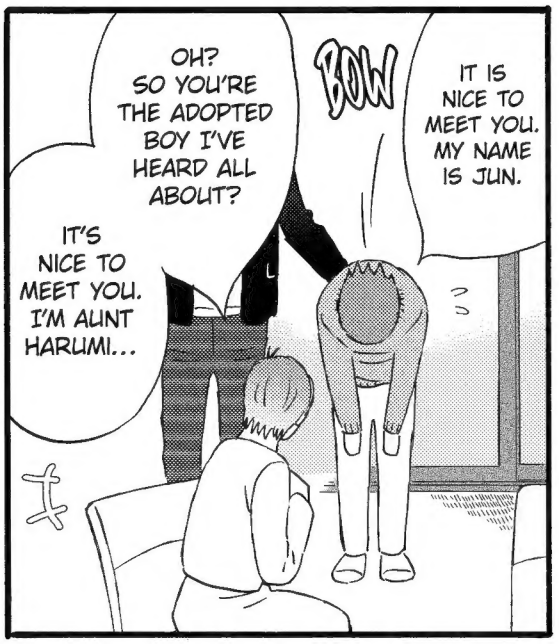

EVEN YOUR BEST FRIEND WAS ONCE A TOTAL STRANGER.
OKAY... THANK YOU.

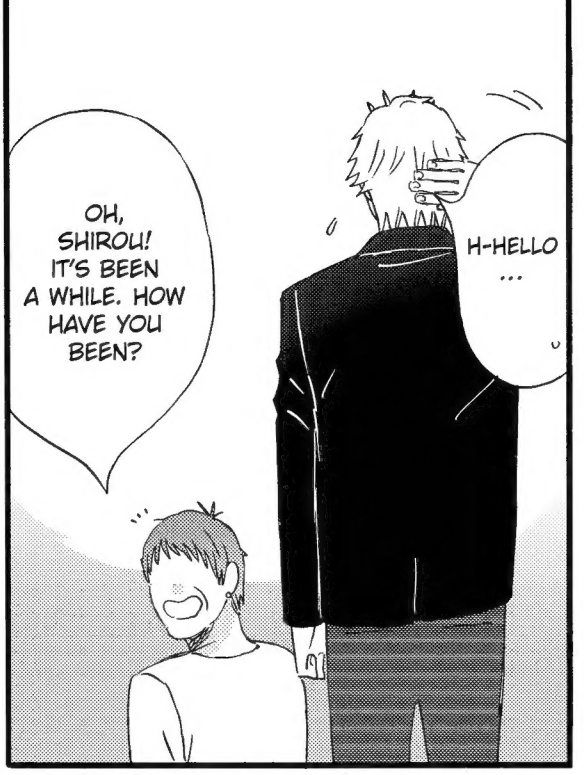



YEAH, I KNOW. I WAS GOING TO DO THAT JUST NOW!
C'MON, BIG BRO! TAKE JUN-KUN WITH YOU AND INTRODUCE HIM TO EVERYONE!

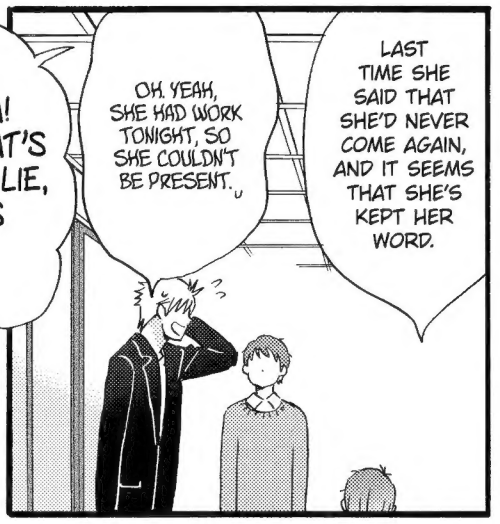
NEXT IS... AUNT HARUMI, HUH...?
...UGH.
HM? WHAT'S WRONG?
NOTHING AT ALL...

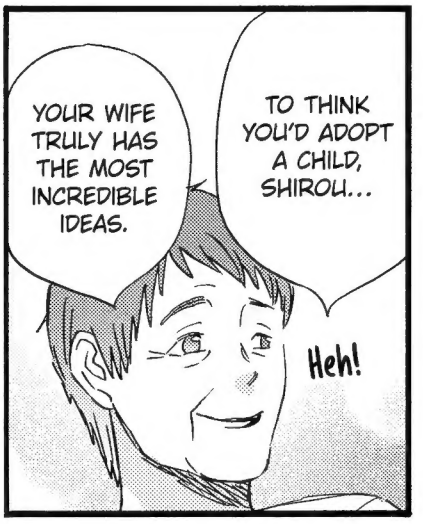



OH? SO YOU'RE THE ADOPTED BOY I'VE HEARD ALL ABOUT?
BOW
IT IS NICE TO MEET YOU. MY NAME IS JUN.
IT'S NICE TO MEET YOU. I'M AUNT HARUMI...


OH, SHIROU! IT'S BEEN A WHILE. HOW HAVE YOU BEEN?
H-HELLO ...

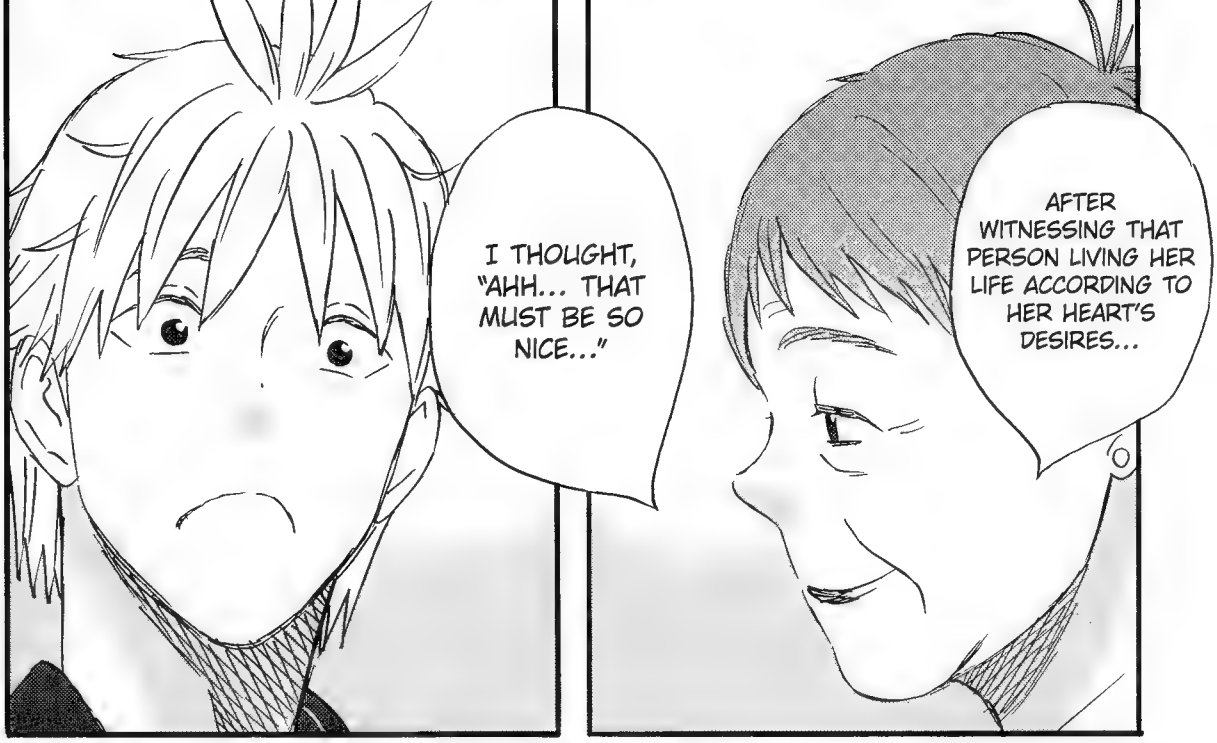
HA HA HA! I KNOW THAT'S A BLATANT LIE, BUT IT'S FINE.
Ha ha...

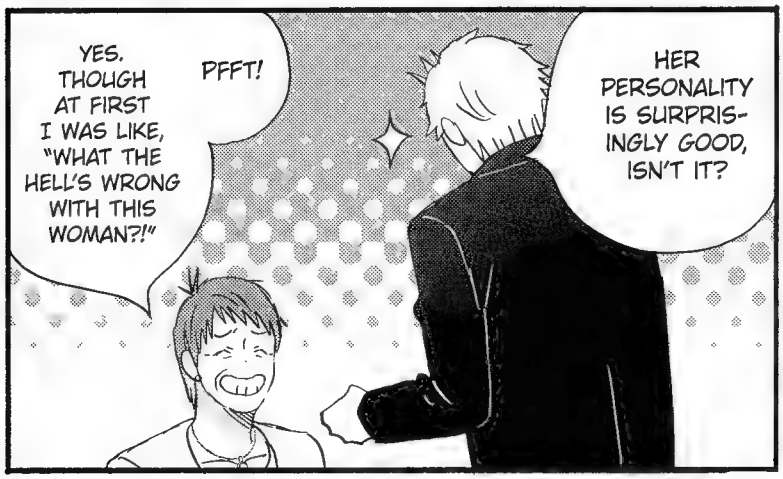

OH. YEAH, SHE HAD WORK TONIGHT, SO SHE COULDN'T BE PRESENT.
LAST TIME SHE SAID THAT SHE'D NEVER COME AGAIN, AND IT SEEMS THAT SHE'S KEPT HER WORD.


YOUR WIFE TRULY HAS THE MOST INCREDIBLE IDEAS.
TO THINK YOU'D ADOPT A CHILD, SHIROU...
Heh!

OH!
HUH?!
I'M DIVORCED NOW.
... SERIOUSLY?

"INFORM?"
IT'S A SHAME, THOUGH. THERE WAS SOMETHING I WANTED TO INFORM AI-SAN ABOUT.
THAT'S RIGHT...


I THOUGHT, "AHH... THAT MUST BE SO NICE..."
AFTER WITNESSING THAT PERSON LIVING HER LIFE ACCORDING TO HER HEART'S DESIRES...

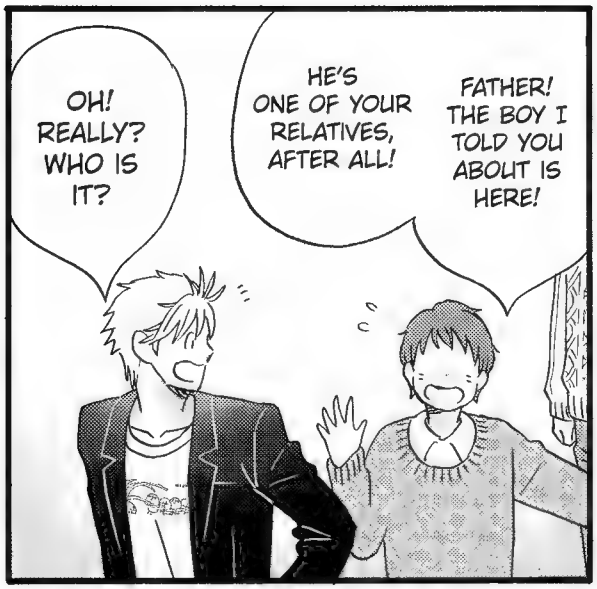

YES. THOUGH AT FIRST I WAS LIKE, "WHAT THE HELL'S WRONG WITH THIS WOMAN?!"
PFFT!
HER PERSONALITY IS SURPRISINGLY GOOD, ISN'T IT?

GRIN!

OH!
YOU ARE...!

Tap
Tap

WAIT, WHAAAAT?!


OH! REALLY? WHO IS IT?
HE'S ONE OF YOUR RELATIVES, AFTER ALL!
FATHER! THE BOY I TOLD YOU ABOUT IS HERE!

ACTUALLY, WE FORGOT THE INTRODUCTIONS.
THANKS FOR EARLIER!
I'M JUN. KIRISHIMA JUN.

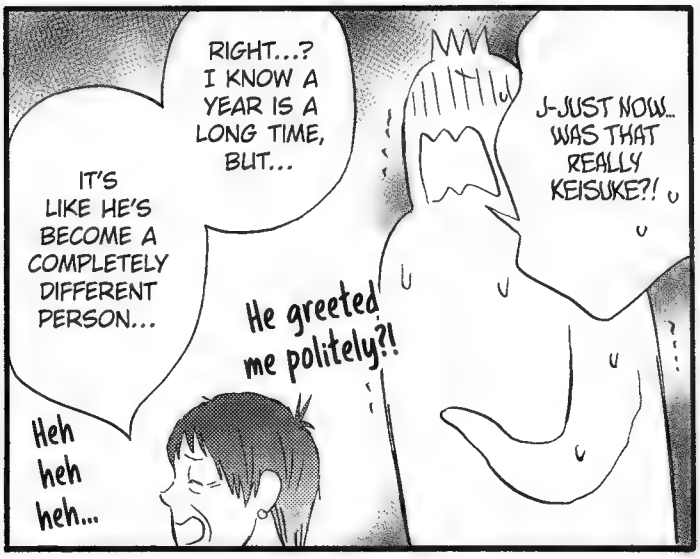
...
THIS GUY?
HM? YEAH.

HUUH?!
LONG TIME NO SEE, COUSIN SHIROU.
OH... YEAH, IT'S BEEN... A WHILE...
BOW

KIRISHIMA KEISUKE.
I'M KEISUKE.

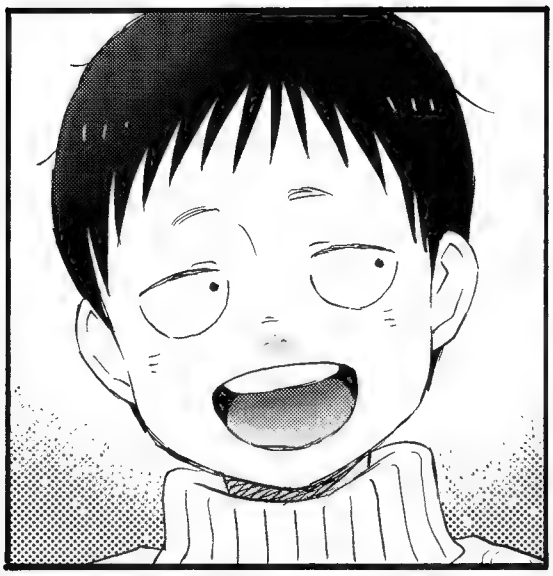
OH! THANK YOU VERY MUCH!
I'LL TELL THE REST OF THE FAMILY ABOUT YOU.
INTRODUCTIONS ARE PRETTY MUCH OVER, GO AHEAD AND JOIN THEM.

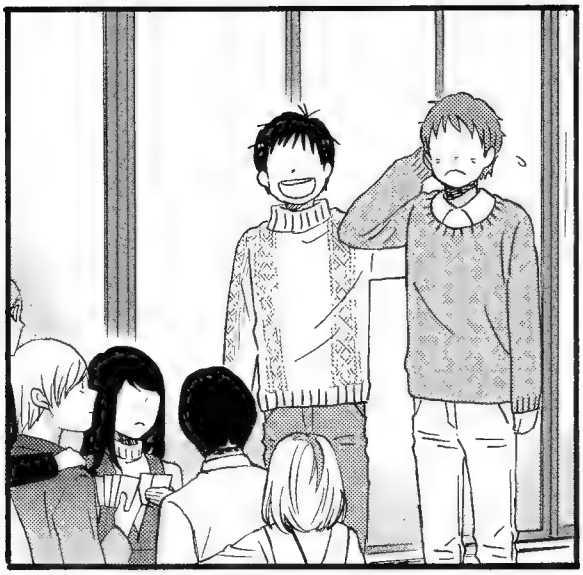
HUH...?! CAN I?
DO YOU WANT TO JOIN US?
WE'RE PLAYING CARDS OVER THERE.

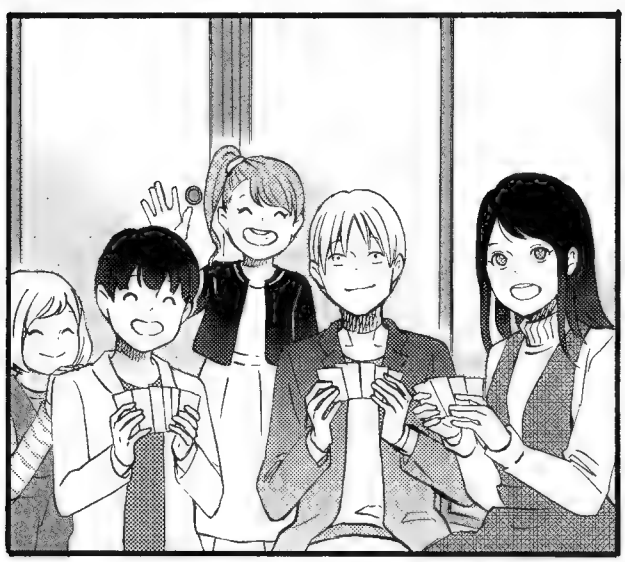

RIGHT...? I KNOW A YEAR IS A LONG TIME, BUT...
IT'S LIKE HE'S BECOME A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PERSON...
Heh heh heh...
He greeted me politely?!
J-JUST NOW... WAS THAT REALLY KEISUKE?!

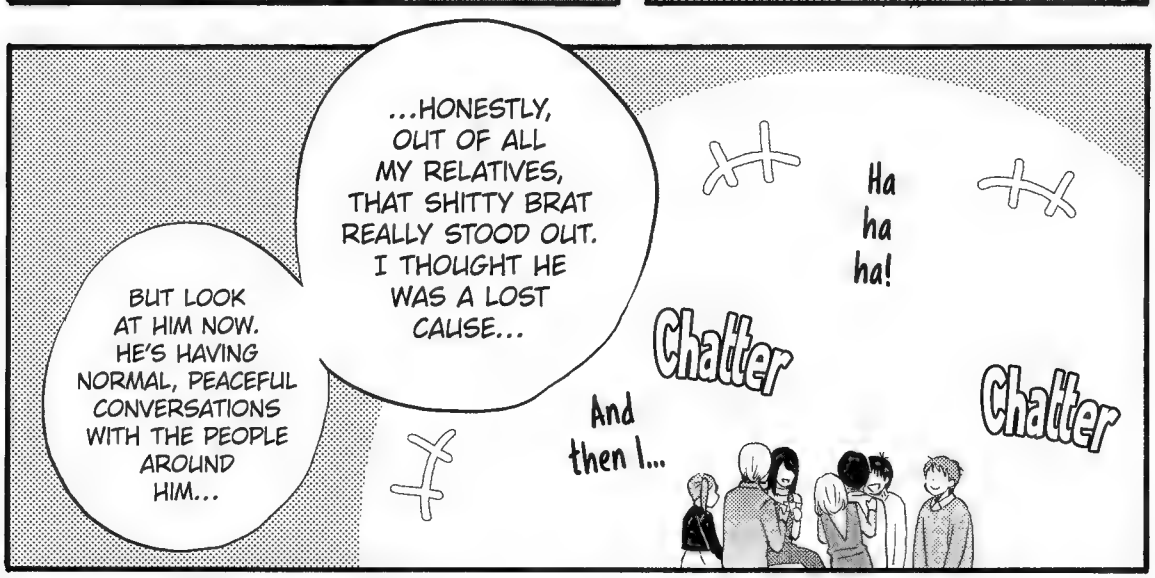
WHAA...? SERIOUSLY... I DIDN'T EXPECT THIS AT ALL!
SINCE THAT DAY, HE'S GROWN AS A PERSON. SO MUCH THAT YOU CAN HARDLY RECOGNIZE HIM...
It's quite the surprise, isn't it?

Heh heh!
I FEEL LIKE THIS HAPPENED BECAUSE AI-SAN SMACKED HIM HARD LAST TIME...



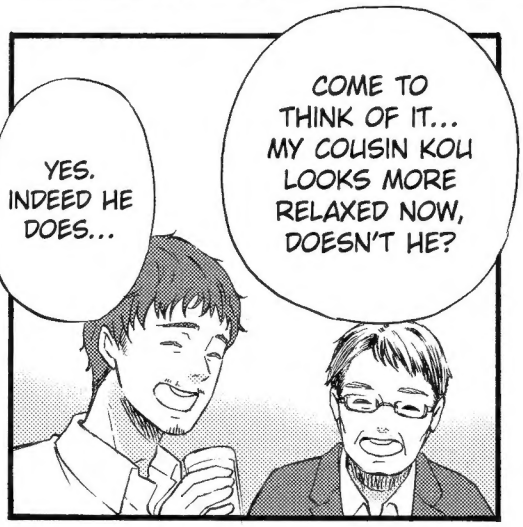


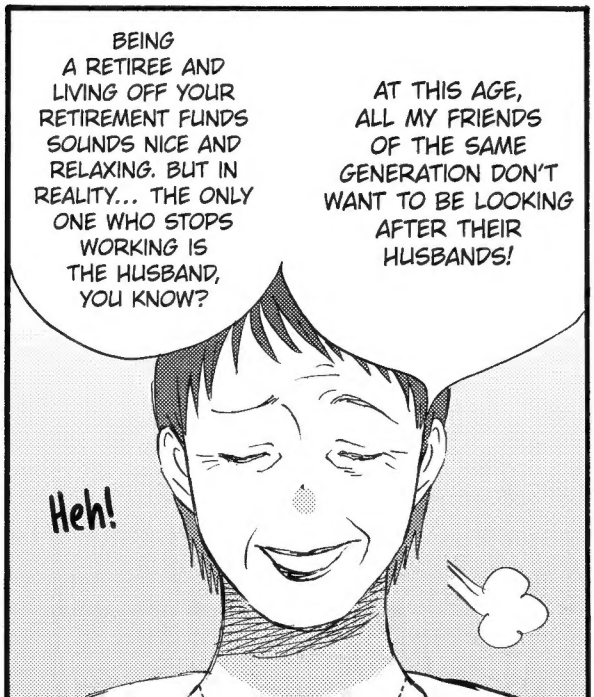



...HONESTLY, OUT OF ALL MY RELATIVES, THAT SHITTY BRAT REALLY STOOD OUT. I THOUGHT HE WAS A LOST CAUSE...
BUT LOOK AT HIM NOW. HE'S HAVING NORMAL, PEACEFUL CONVERSATIONS WITH THE PEOPLE AROUND HIM...
Ha ha ha!
Chatter
Chatter
And then I...

I MEAN, LET'S BE HONEST HERE. NOBODY IN THIS ROOM LIKED THAT KID. EVEN I SOMETIMES THOUGHT IT WOULDN'T BE BAD IF HE JUST POOFED OUT OF EXISTENCE
HEY... I DIDN'T KNOW YOU HATED KEISUKE THAT MUCH...
IS THIS A MIRACLE...?!

YOU'RE RIGHT... THE SENSE OF LIBERATION AFTER A DIVORCE IS INCREDIBLE!
Ha ha ha!
Just kidding!
IT'S NOT JUST HIM. YOU ALSO LOOK LIKE YOU'VE FINALLY FOUND PEACE.

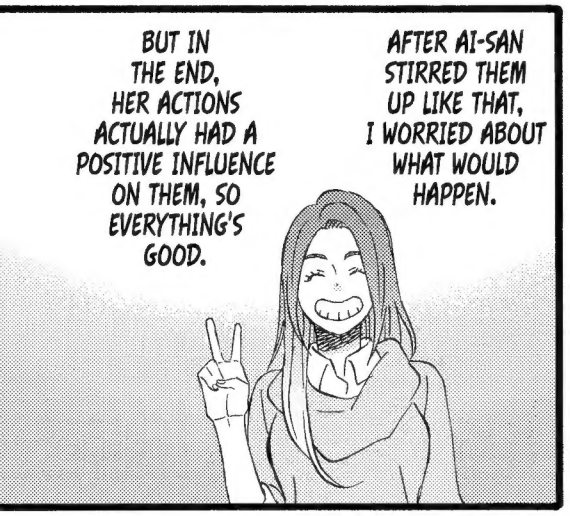

YES. INDEED HE DOES...
COME TO THINK OF IT... MY COUSIN KOU LOOKS MORE RELAXED NOW, DOESN'T HE?


BEING A RETIREE AND LIVING OFF YOUR RETIREMENT FUNDS SOUNDS NICE AND RELAXING. BUT IN REALITY... THE ONLY ONE WHO STOPS WORKING IS THE HUSBAND, YOU KNOW?
AT THIS AGE, ALL MY FRIENDS OF THE SAME GENERATION DON'T WANT TO BE LOOKING AFTER THEIR HUSBANDS!
Heh!

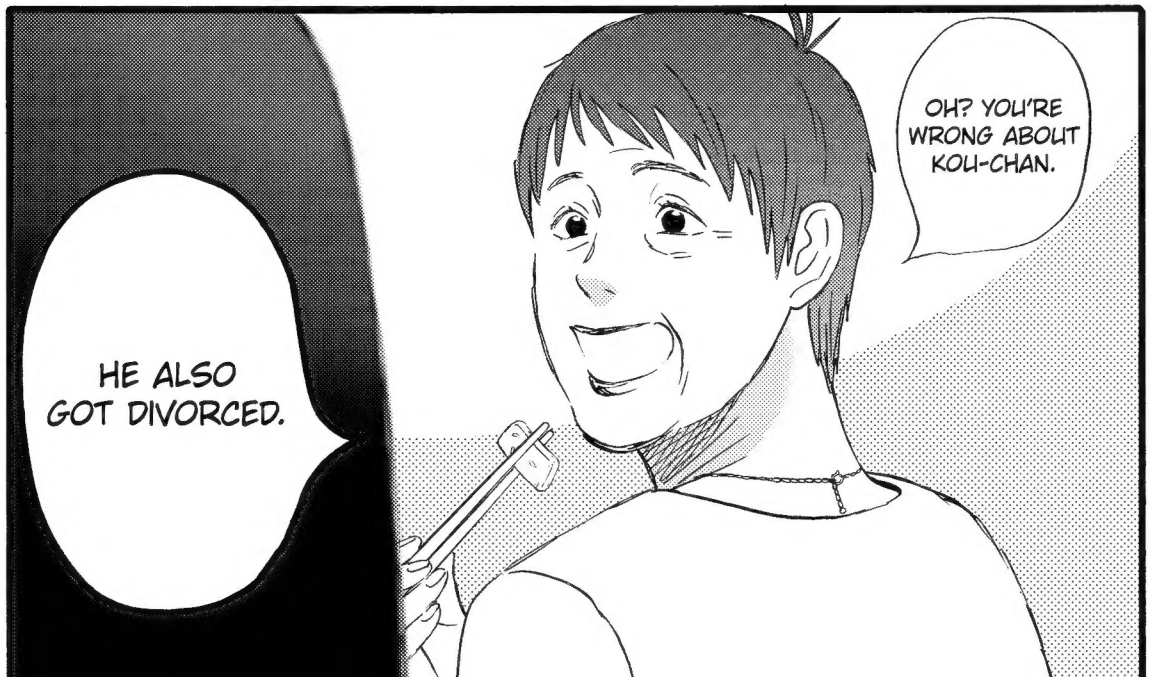
"JEALOUS LOOKS...?" WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
EVER SINCE I GOT SEPARATED, I'VE BEEN GETTING JEALOUS LOOKS FROM EVERYONE.
?

I SEE... I GUESS THAT'S THE MAIN CAUSE OF MIDDLE-AGE DIVORCES...
REALLY... IF HE DOESN'T DO ANYTHING AROUND THE HOUSE, THEN HE'S JUST A MISERABLE OLD MAN!

I DID EVERYTHING FOR HIM, SO HE NEVER MOVED A MUSCLE...
HONESTLY... I WAS SICK AND TIRED OF HAVING TO TAKE CARE OF MY HUSBAND, WHO HAD TURNED INTO THIS HUGE, USELESS ORNAMENTAL FIGURE. HE WAS ALWAYS AT HOME DOING NOTHING...!
AS FOR THE WIFE, SHE'S STILL BUSY AS ALWAYS WITH THE HOUSEWORK.

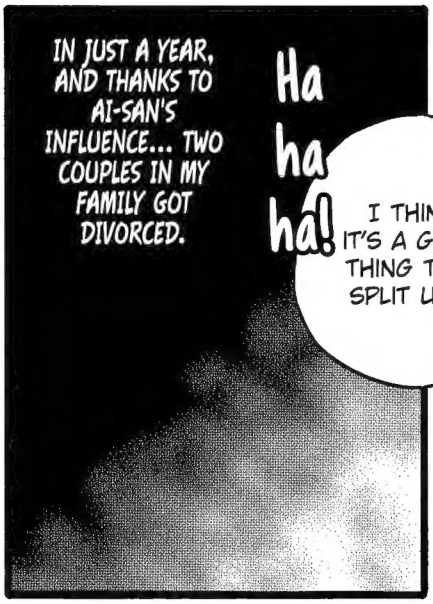

BUT IN THE END, HER ACTIONS ACTUALLY HAD A POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON THEM, SO EVERYTHING'S GOOD.
AFTER AI-SAN STIRRED THEM UP LIKE THAT, I WORRIED ABOUT WHAT WOULD HAPPEN.

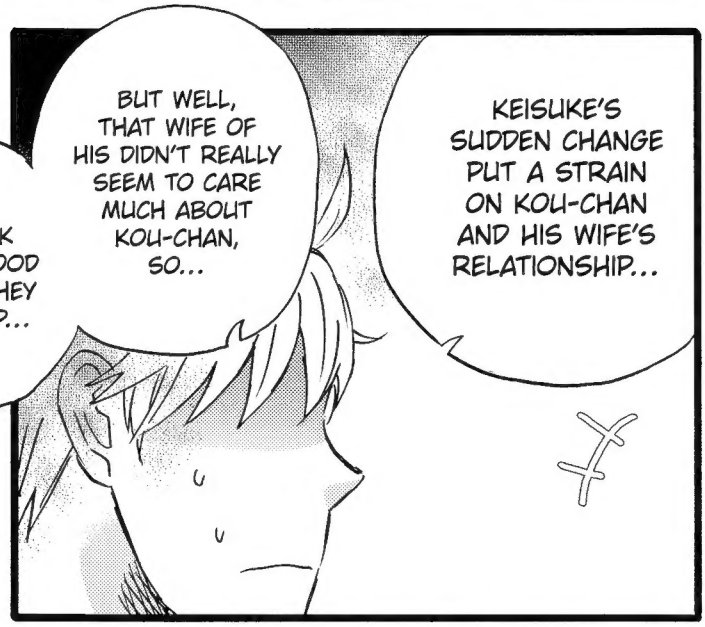
That makes sense.
SO, AUNT HARUMI... YOU FINALLY FOUND PEACE AFTER BEING FREED FROM YOUR CHEATING HUSBAND.
AS FOR MY COUSIN KOU, I SUPPOSE HE'S HAPPIER BECAUSE HE'S FINALLY FREE FROM KEISUKE'S SELFISHNESS.

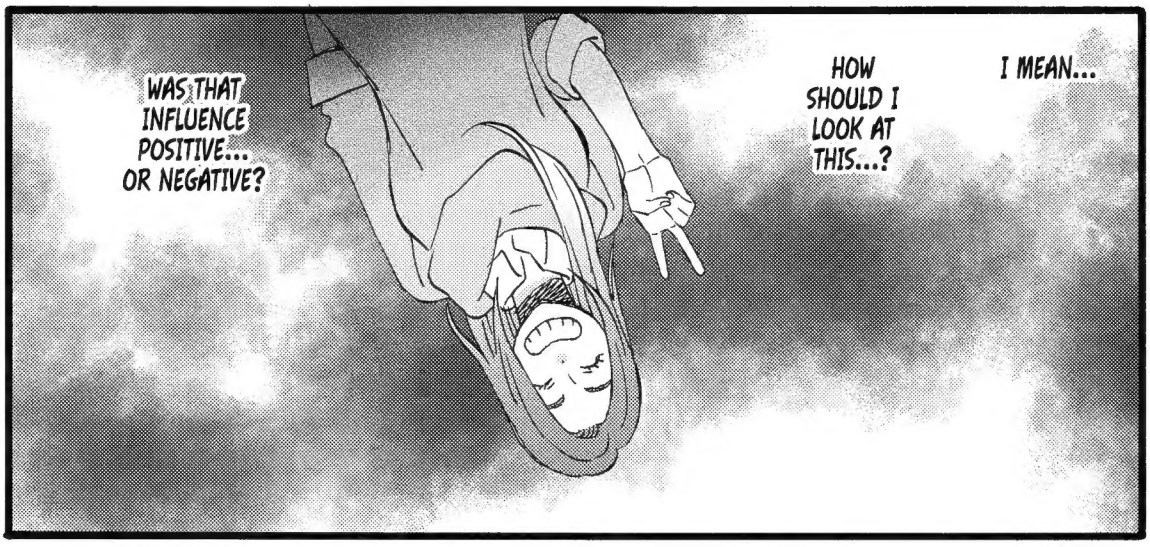

OH? YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT KOU-CHAN.
HE ALSO GOT DIVORCED.

WHAT?!

...
Oh, my! This is delicious!


IN JUST A YEAR, AND THANKS TO AI-SAN'S INFLUENCE... TWO COUPLES IN MY FAMILY GOT DIVORCED.
Ha ha ha!


I THINK IT'S A GOOD THING THEY SPLIT UP...
BUT WELL, THAT WIFE OF HIS DIDN'T REALLY SEEM TO CARE MUCH ABOUT KOU-CHAN, SO...
KEISUKE'S SUDDEN CHANGE PUT A STRAIN ON KOU-CHAN AND HIS WIFE'S RELATIONSHIP...


WAS THAT INFLUENCE POSITIVE... OR NEGATIVE?
HOW SHOULD I LOOK AT THIS...?
I MEAN...